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BAT MAN

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IN THE CAVE, LIMESTONE SLOWLY FLOWS...

...WHILE RED SKIES ARE PAINTED BLACK BY A BAT.

THIS WAS DELIVERED FOR *YOU*, BATMAN--LEFT RIGHT ON MY DESK WHILE I STEPPED OUT FOR NO MORE THAN A *MINUTE*.

MEANING IT WAS BROUGHT IN THROUGH THE *WINDOW*--AND IT'S A WAY OF *THANKING* ME FOR THE PARACHUTE HURLED OUT OF THAT JETLINER AFTER SELINA KYLE PLUNGED THROUGH THE EMERGENCY DOOR.

LOOKS LIKE *CATWOMAN* IS BACK IN TOWN, GORDON... AND MAYBE BACK IN *BUSINESS*.

AND I'M *WORRIED*, BATMAN, BECAUSE ACTING MAYOR SKOWCROFT COULD USE IT *AGAINST* ME IF CATWOMAN STARTS ANY MORE TROUBLE.

NO *NEED* FOR WORRY, JIM--CATWOMAN HAS "*REFORMED*."

IF ANYTHING, SHE'LL CLEAN UP *OTHER* CRIMINALS.

PRECISELY THE TROUBLE I'M TALKING ABOUT.

HARD ENOUGH FOR THE GOTHAM POLICE FORCE TO MAINTAIN RESPECT IN *YOUR* SHADOW...

IF ANY *MORE* "*VIGILANTES*" POP UP, SKOWCROFT MAY WONDER IF A POLICE COMMISSIONER IS *NECESSARY*--ESPECIALLY ONE WHO REFUSES TO PLAY HIS BRAND OF *POLITICAL HARDBALL*.

BESIDES, HAVEN'T YOU *HEARD*...?

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THREE DAYS LATER, AT PICTURE NEWS:

WHY *RED* SKIES...?

JUST BACK FROM THE ACTING MAYOR'S *PRESS* CONFERENCE, VICKI...

...AND AFTER THE MURDERS OF THOSE THREE *FALSE FACE SOCIETY* MEMBERS, HE'S FIT TO BE *TIED*.

BY HIS OWN *RED TAPE*, NO DOUBT, BUT WHAT DID HE HAVE TO SAY, JULIA?

FIRST, SKOWCROFT CLAIMS THE NAILED-UP-MASK ANGLE POINTS TO A "*PSYCHO VIGILANTE*"--MAYBE *CATWOMAN*, HE HINTED...

...BUT MOST OF HIS BLAME WAS DIRECTED AT THE *POLICE*, FOR NOT CONTROLLING SUCH "*REGRETTABLE INCIDENTS*," AND FOR NOT HAVING ARRESTED THE *VICTIMS* LONG AGO.

HE MENTIONED GORDON THREE TIMES AND VOWED, IF ELECTED, "*DRASTIC IMPROVEMENTS*" IN THE POLICE FORCE "*FROM THE TOP ON DOWN*"...

HMP.

TUNK

...SOMEWHAT LIKE YOUR *NEW BODY*, VICKI, SINCE YOU STARTED GOING TO THAT *HEALTH SPA*.

SUCH A *CATTY* COMPLIMENT, JULIA...

...BUT AT LEAST *SOMEONE* NOTICED.

SHADES OF RUPERT THORNE AN' HAMILTON HILL, HUH, COMMISH?

AIN'T THERE NO DECENT POLITICIANS IN THIS BURG?

IT'S NOT AT ALL THE SAME, BULLOCK...

THORNE AND HILL WERE OUTRIGHT CROOKS, BUT SKOWCROFT IS BASICALLY WELL-MEANING.

INDEED, HE MAY BE TOO NAIVE TO BE CROOKED.

TUMP TUMP

HE STILL HATES US, COMMISH.

I-YI-YI...

YES, HE'S MIFFED AT US--

--FOR REFUSING TO SUPPORT HIM CARTE BLANCHE--

THE GOTHAM GAZETTE

--BUT HIS WORST SIN IS INCOMPETENCE--A POLITICAL BUNGLER WAY OVER HIS HEAD.

WHICH MAY BE WORSE THAN BEIN' CROOKED, COMMISH.

I-YI-YI...

BLOPTCH

THE SKY'S NOT ENOUGH FOR YA? YOU HADDA MAKE MY COUNTER RED TOO?

NOT WORSE FOR THE SAKE OF HIS OWN SOUL, BULLOCK... BUT FOR THE REST OF THE CITY, YES...

I HAVE TO AGREE YOU MAY BE RED...

UH, RIGHT, RATHER.

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

AND STILL THE LIMESTONE DRIPS IN DARKNESS...

...WHILE RED RAINS FALL.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! I'M TELLIN' YA NO ONE'S GONNA BOTHER US HERE.

THIS OBSERVATORY WAS SHUT DOWN A YEAR AGO--BACK WHEN REAGAN CUT THE FUNDS.

JUST POLLUTION, MAN--THEY USED TO TALK ABOUT IT IN THE SIXTIES.

YOU WANT ELECTRICITY TO RUN YOUR STEREO AND YOUR TUBE, THEN YOU GOTTA HAVE RED RAIN, RIGHT?

YEAH, I GUESS SO... BUT STILL...

SAVAGE SKULLS

YEAH, I KNOW, AND MY OLD MAN SAYS IT MAY NEVER BE USED AGAIN...

V-VMMMMMMMM

HEY! YOU HEAR THAT... THAT HUM--?

YEAH, SOUNDS LIKE A GENERATOR COMIN' ON--ELECTRICITY...

BUT STILL...I DUNNO... MAYBE I'M JUST SPOOKED BY THE RED SKIES AND THE RAIN...

RRRRRRR

THE LIGHT! THE RAIN'S PUTTIN' OUT THE CANDLES!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON?!

WHO'S HERE--?!

LEAVE THIS PLACE, CHILDREN.

NOW.

SHE AIN'T NO GHOST--JUST SOME CRAZY BROAD!

A GHOST!!

THE CEILING-- IT'S STARTIN' TO OPEN UP!

THE RED SKIES, MAN! THE END OF THE WORLD-- ALL THE DEAD RISIN' UP FROM THEIR GRAVES FOR VENGEANCE!

YOU BEEN READIN' TOO MUCH JUNKY STEPHEN KING, MAN--

OH, MY GOD-- SOMEONE'S HERE! THEY'RE GONNA GET US!

SLITCH

--AND I'M GONNA PROVE IT.

YOUR SKIN'S *PALE ENOUGH* FOR A GHOST, LADY-- LIKE IT AIN'T GOT *NO BLOOD* UNDER IT-- SO MAYBE THIS SHIV *CAN'T* HURT YA...

...BUT ME, I GOT A HUNCH YOU'RE GONNA BLEE--

WHAK

SHOKK

THARP

SKUMP

E-ENOUGH, LADY...

EXIT

I'M LEAVIN'-- I'M LEAVIN'!

EXIT

AND SO, UNDER SUCH STRANGE, STRANGE SKIES...

THE GOTHAM CHILD WELFARE BUREAU, MORNING!

NO, NO, BRUCE IS FINE, AMANDA--A GREAT GUY, AND THE BEST FATHER ANYBODY COULD HAVE.

IF I SOUND DOWN, IT'S PROBABLY JUST THE WEIRD SKY, Y'KNOW... BUT...

BUT, JASON...?

BUT NOTHING, REALLY, IT'S JUST THAT... WELL, AS GOOD A FATHER AS BRUCE IS, HE'S NOT A MOTHER.

...I'M HOME.

GUESS I JUST WANTED TO HEAR A WOMAN'S VOICE, IS ALL...

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

AND ESPECIALLY SUCH A MATERNAL WOMAN LIKE ME, JASON?

I GUESS... BUT DON'T MAKE A BIG DEAL OF IT, AMANDA...

I UNDERSTAND, JASON, AND ANY TIME YOU FEEL LIKE TALKING, I'M HERE. NOW... WHAT SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT?

UM... MAYBE ABOUT...

...ABOUT MY MOM, OKAY?

MAYBE IT'S THE PRESSURE OF FEELING THAT JASON NEEDS A MOTHER--OR MAYBE IT'S THAT STATUE DELIVERED BY CATWOMAN...

...BUT I CAN'T GET OVER THE FACT THAT MY ONLY FAILURE AS A MAN COMES IN MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOMEN...

CATWOMAN, NOCTURNA, TALIA, JULIA... I'M CONFUSED ABOUT ALL OF THEM...

...AND NOW THAT SHE'S BROKEN OFF WITH ME SO ANGRILY, I'VE JUST GOT TO SETTLE THINGS WITH--

12"

ONE WAY

NO TRUCKS

HARDBODY HEALTH SPA

...GOT A LOT OF PEOPLE COMING HERE, BRUCE!

BUT, VICKI--

YOU KNOW, I'VE GOT A MAKESHIFT DARTBOARD IN MY OFFICE AT PICTURE NEWS--

--WITH YOUR PHOTO ON IT

VICKI, PLEASE

AND THE DARTS ARE COMING IN CLOSER EVERY DAY

BUT, VICKI, I'M JUST TRYING TO SAY THAT MAYBE YOU AND I--

AND MR WAYNE

FORGET IT

NEVER MIND

SHOULD STOP SEEING EACH OTHER

AND THE STALACTITE GROWS LONGER BY A DROP.

AND NO DOUBT I'LL BE BLAMED

BY EVERYONE BUT ME, CATWOMAN

YOU! THEN WHILE I WAS STALKING THE MASK, YOU WERE STALKING ME

AND STILL THE RED RAIN FALLS, FROM CLOUDS MASKING THE STARS

WHAT AN UNGODLY MESS THOSE KIDS'VE MADE..

DID YOU SEE WHO--

NO

BUT I KNOW YOU DIDN'T DO IT AND IF YOU'LL AGREE TO SURRENDER WITH ME TO AN IMPARTIAL JUSTICE, I THINK WE SHOULD TALK

NO I'M THE ONLY A

JUSTICE

AGHH!
I I
AGHHH!

WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE NIGHT SPAWN, MASTER
MASTER WAR CHIEF
YES, I SEE. DON'T PANIC!!

WE'RE HERE

AND I'M GLAD YOU CONSENTED TO THE BLINDFOLD, BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING HERE I'VE WANTED TO *SHOW* YOU FOR A *LONG TIME*...

YOU'RE NOT ALL WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT *HERE*...?

THIS *DEPOSIT*... A *STALAGMITE* JUST STARTING TO FORM...

IT LOOKS LIKE A CAT

I COME HERE *OFTEN*.

EACH TIME, THE IMAGE IS CHANGED JUST A LITTLE

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS *CLEARER*, *SHARPER*... OTHER TIMES MORE *OBSCURE* BUT *EVERY* TIME, I THINK OF *YOU*.

YES...FORMED BY THE DRIPPING *LIMESTONE* AND AIDED BY GLOOM AND *IMAGINATION*

HER FEAR

SOMEDAY THE DRIPPING STALACTITE AND THE RISING CAT WILL MEET... AND FUSE...

BUT NOT TONIGHT?

NO.

PERHAPS NOT IN OUR LIFETIMES.

AND THEN SHE TURNS AWAY

ALL RIGHT, BATMAN, YOU'VE SEEN MY OUR ARE SAFE

I'M READY FOR THE ENLIGHTENED AGAIN

AND THE

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT.

WHERE IS NOCTURNA?

SO MAYBE YOU AND I WON'T MEET IN THIS LIFETIME, BATMAN, AND WON'T FUSE--

--BUT DON'T THINK THAT'S GOING TO STOP ME FROM DOING WHAT I DO.

I'M NOT JUST TRYING TO [illegible] AND MORE, OR EVEN SMART / [illegible] BUT AT THIS POINT.

I REALIZE THAT, CATWOMAN BUT

AT FIRST, I'D PLANNED TO MERELY CLEAN UP BLACK MASK'S LEFT-

BUT NOW THAT I'M OFFING THEM WITH A STILETTO, I'M AFTER A

AND [illegible] MY NAME, IF NOTHING ELSE.

I UNDERSTAND THAT, CATWOMAN...

ARE YOU SAYING WHAT YOU DO IS WRONG, BATMAN?

NO, BUT--

THEN YOU'RE SAYING I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO DO WHAT YOU DO?

NO I'M JUST--

THEN YOU'RE SAYING NOTHING WORTH LISTENING TO.

GOTTA BE CONNECTED TO THESE LOUSY RED SHOES..

COULD EXPLAIN A GHOST LIKE THAT!

'D IN THE LUNCHROOM,

MY BROTHER, HE KNOWS SOME OF THE SAVAGE SKULLS, RIGHT? SO THE SKULLS ARE HAVIN' THIS PARTY UP AT THE OLD ABANDONED OBSERVATORY, RIGHT?

YEAH

'D IN FLOATS AND CHIEF DRESSED ALL IN BLACK, WITH HIS BOOTS UP THE PARTY WITH SLEEPWALKING MYERS OR SOME THING... SENDS

YEAH, AND THIS BROOK DAME HAS, LIKE, RARE WHITE SKIN, BUT SHE'S A REAL FOX

AND MY BROTHER, HE SAID SHE SOUNDS LIKE A GHOST HE WOULDN'T MIND JUMPIN' HIS BONES ANY DAY.

HELLO

BOK BAK BAK

IT'S MY HUSBAND. HE'S BEEN GONE THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS NOW. HASN'T SHOWN UP AT WORK AND HASN'T COME HOME.

UH-HUH, AND PRIOR TO HIS DISAPPEARANCE WAS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT-

THE SAME, AND YOU'RE MRS JULIAN MARSH.. WHO CALLED IN A MISSING PERSONS?

IF YOU MEAN WAS HE SEEING ANOTHER WOMAN?

I MEAN, NOT FOR ANY ONE PARTICULAR REASON OR ANYTHING...

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

[illegible] SAYS [illegible] FOR THE [illegible] CEASES [illegible] WHEN SOMEONE CALLS HIM A [illegible] SECURITY [illegible]

YEAH, YEAH, GOTCHA, [illegible] ON

WELL, I'LL [illegible] HE COMES HOME IN THE MORNING AND GOES TO SLEEP..

...BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN HE STARTED LOCKING HIMSELF IN THE BEDROOM AND STAYING AWAKE ALL DAY..

UH-HUH... AND, UH, WHADDAYA THINK OCCASIONED THIS ODD BEHAVIOR? YOU AN' THE HUBBY HAVIN' FIGHTS, MAYBE?

I'LL [illegible] PLEASE, LADY, TRY TA BE PERT'NENT, HUH?

[illegible] JUST LEAVE FOR WORK WITHOUT SAYING A WORD.

NO! HE.. HE WAS.. [illegible]

[illegible] HERE'S MY [illegible] HUSBAN'S CAR

LADY, I [illegible] I MEAN I'M BE BRUSQUE WITH THE FACTS O' LIFE HERE, BUT THE POLICE FORCE IS EYEBALL-DEEP IN TROUBLE RIGHT NOW, AND [illegible] DESERTION AIN'T THE KIND OF CHERRY WE NEED ON TOP.

[illegible] DESERTION AIN'T THE SAME THING AS A "MISSING [illegible] AND IT AIN'T EVEN WITHIN OUR [illegible]

HERE! JUST READ THIS, MR. SLOPPY SGT.

THERE'S SOO MORE SHEETS JUST LIKE IT UNDER THE MATTRESS IN THE BEDROOM! YOU WANT TO READ THEM ALL OR DO YOU WANT TO TELL ME RIGHT NOW

IS THAT THE WORK OF A NORMAL TWO-TIMING CREEP WHO'S DESERTING HIS WIFE?

NOCTURNA...?

I I REQUEST IN YOUR

I'M NOT HUNGRY, MARGH, NOR DID I EVER INTEND FOR YOU TO SERVE ME

YOU SHOULD RETURN TO YOUR WIFE.

THREAT? I MERELY WISHED TO ELIMINATE... WITHOUT VIOLENCE.

I KNOW, MY PALE WOMAN

I SERVE YOU BECAUSE I WANT TO.

NOCTURNA!

SHE'S DEAD BECAUSE I WAS GREEDY

THEN AT LEAST *LEAVE* ME FOR A TIME... LEAVE ME IN *MY* STRANGE, SUFFERING NIGHT... WITH MY DARK STARS AND RED SKIES...

VERY WELL, MY LADY, WHATEVER YOU *WISH*.

THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

IT'S *GOT* TO BE HER.

NATALIA KNIGHT-- *NOCTURNA*.

HIS "*MISTRESS*," MY EYE!

IF IT AIN'T THE THIEF *NOCTURNA*, I'LL EAT MY BATTERED BACK BUMPER!

SNAP!

KRAK! THRESH!

SNAP!

YAHHH!!

WHAT THE--?!

B-BULLOCK?

YEAH--AND I MIGHTA KNOWN YOU HEARD ABOUT HER BEIN' HERE TOO, KID... BUT IF WE'RE GONNA TEAM UP AS GHOST-BUSTERS...

... I'M TELLIN' YA THIS MUCH--

IT AIN'T GONNA BE DONE PIGGYBACK!

NIMBLY, ROBIN LANDS ON THE RUN...

... AND SOON:

AWRIGHT, KID, WE'LL SPLIT UP AN' SEARCH THE PLACE TOP TO BOTTOM, BUT JUST REMEMBER...

THIS COLLAR'S MINE.

GOTHAM CRIMINAL COURT

AT ONE TIME I WANTED NATALIA KNIGHT TO BE ARRESTED, BUT NOW... NOW I'M ALL CONFUSED.

NATALIA?

NOCTURNA..?

UP HERE, ROBIN.

HUH?

OUT ON THE LEDGE..!

FIND ANYTHING YET, KID?

AND HIS HEART POUNDS...

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

UH... NOTHING, BULLOCK.

YOU CHECK OUT THE AREA *BELOW* AND I'LL JOIN YOU WHEN I'M *DONE HERE.*

THEY'RE ALL *LIARS*-- *ALL* OF THEM! BLACK MASK IS IN *ARKHAM ASYLUM*--

BAK BAK BAW

--YET HIS GANG IS STILL OPERATING IN *COORDINATED* FASHION...

...WHICH MEANS THEY HAVE A *NEW LEADER*-- THEY *MUST*--AND WHO *ELSE* WOULD LEAD A GANG OF *MASKED* THIEVES--

--IF NOT *NOCTURNA*, SHE WHO MUST PAY FOR SLAYING THE NIGHT-SLAYER...

...FOR *MURDERING* ME.

NOCTURNA-- ARE YOU STILL *UP HERE*?

NATALIA--?

IT'S *NOT* CAUSED BY A *COMET*, YOU KNOW.

IT'S CAUSED BY NOTHING ANY ASTRONOMER HAS EVER *KNOWN*... AND IT MAY WELL BE THE *DEATH OF THE NIGHT*...

IF YOU *SAY* SO, NOCTURNA... BUT I'M JUST GLAD THE NIGHT-SLAYER HASN'T *FOUND* YOU YET...

SIT WITH ME, JASON.

I'M *COLD*... AND I'M *DISTURBED*...

FAR BELOW, STRANGE RAINS TURN THE RUSHING RIVER TO A DARK RED GASH.

HELL IN THE *HEAVENS*, JASON...

YEAH... BUT RIGHT NOW, I *LIKE* IT...

...*MOM*.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF 'TEC:

THE BLEEDING NIGHT!